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DEPT FOR EEB/CBA DENNIS WINSTEAD
NEW DELHI FOR FCS
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TAGS: [BEXP](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: 2009 BUSINESS FACILITATION INCENTIVE FUND: BANGLADESH
REQUEST

REF: 08 State 128559

SUMMARY

1. Mission Dhaka welcomes the opportunity to improve business promotion and commercial outreach that the Business Facilitation Incentive Fund provides. In the last two years, our commercial workload has increased dramatically, and our small Trade Center would greatly benefit from BFIF support. Requests for commercial services, including International Company Profiles, International Partnership Searches and Gold Key Services, more than doubled from FY07 to FY08. FY09 promises to see further significant increases in demand for commercial services. In FY08, we collected \$6,035 in commercial service fees, and five months into FY09 we have already collected \$7,080.

2. We anticipate that recent political developments in Bangladesh will lead to even more opportunities for U.S. business. After two years of an interim government and significant political uncertainty, a democratically-elected government took office early in January. The new government won a landslide victory in the recent national elections, receiving a clear mandate from the people of Bangladesh. Increased trade and investment in Bangladesh, and development of the energy sector and infrastructure projects are among the new government's top priorities. The new Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, addressed the American Chamber of Commerce during her election campaign and signaled her keen interest in expanding trade and investment with the United States. AmCham was the only international business association she reached out to prior to taking office. We here at Mission Dhaka look forward to capitalizing on this interest in U.S. products and services in Bangladesh. Improving U.S.-Bangladesh trade and investment, particularly under the new government, is a key Mission goal. We hope the Department will support our request for Business Facilitation Incentive funds.

Priority One: Regional CS-State Commercial Training and Strategic Planning Program

3. Our top priority is commercial training for our Trade Center staff, which includes a U.S. direct-hire Economic/Commercial Officer and two Locally Engaged Staff (LES). We would welcome the opportunity to participate in any training or shadowing provided under the Commercial Service-State Post Partnering Program. Our partnership post is U.S. Consulate Kolkata, India, and we also interact with our Foreign Commercial Service counterparts at U.S. Embassy New Delhi. Many U.S. company representatives based in India are also responsible for Bangladesh operations. A visit to Dhaka by a delegation from AmCham India in 2008 demonstrated an increasing interest by U.S. companies in the Bangladesh market.

¶4. Training or shadowing by our Econ/Commercial Officer and our two LES staff in either New Delhi or Kolkata would greatly enhance our service to U.S. companies seeking business opportunities in Bangladesh, our understanding of Commercial Service programs and priorities, and our liaison efforts with our Commercial Service colleagues in India. Participation in the training and strategic planning program would also allow our staff to better understand the new fee collection mechanism.

¶5. Our local staff would especially benefit from training/shadowing. Our Commercial Assistant, who is often the first person to interact with U.S. companies who seek our assistance, has worked in our Trade Center for six years, but has received no USG commercial training. Our Econ/Commercial Specialist, who has worked in the Trade Center for almost two years, also has yet to receive USG commercial training.

¶6. Cost Estimate: A three-day training/shadowing program in New Delhi for one American officer and two LES would cost approximately \$7,000. A similar program conducted in Kolkata would cost about \$6,000. This estimate includes the cost of lodging, M&IE, and air fare for three people.

Priority Two: Publications for U.S. Trade Center Outreach

¶7. Enhanced Embassy security has limited physical access to the U.S. Trade Center and reduced its use by the public. Post would like to use BFIF funds to extend our presence into Dhaka-area Chambers of Commerce and other business association offices through

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dissemination of Trade Center publications. Through BFIF, we would cover the printing costs of materials to supplement our outreach efforts. Examples of these publications include: a brochure on Trade Center services, our Country Commercial Guide, answers to frequently asked questions, as well as tips for using the Internet to access USG information and services, including through buyusa.gov. Placing these resources into an "American Business Corner" in various Chambers of Commerce in Dhaka would extend the reach of our Trade Center and increase our ability to reach out to business here.

¶8. Embassy officers now routinely carry our publications to meetings with government and business officials. Our publications and current distribution networks promote economic reform and U.S. exports, both key MSP objectives. Expanding access to these materials, and tailoring materials to clients' needs, would enable us to provide targeted and efficient responses to assistance requests. If the concept is proven, additional American Business Corners could be established in other major cities in Bangladesh, giving us a much wider 'virtual' presence.

¶9. Cost Estimate: Costs of printing promotional materials and preparing small American Business Corner information kiosks for placement in local Chambers of Commerce would run approximately \$4,000.

¶10. Points of contact for Econ/Commercial issues at Embassy Dhaka are:

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